

In the Claims:

Please cancel Claims 12, 18 and 24, without prejudice; amend Claims 7, 9 and 19; and add new Claims 25-27 as indicated below. The status of all pending claims is as follows:

1-6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium storing a program to cause a computer to perform message-address management processing in a system capable of exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, wherein the program causes a server computer to perform:

when a message address of a member of a message ~~group-exchanging~~
~~exchanging group~~ is changed, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member is caused to be received from the client;

determining, from a plurality of provided message address lists, a message address list including the old address of the member, and extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the determined message address list;

specifying a server to which the absence response information is to be provided, on the basis of the extracted message address; and

distributing the absence response information to the specified server.

8. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein the absence response information contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

9. (Currently Amended) A ~~program~~ computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution.

10. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium storing a program to cause a computer to perform message-address management processing in a system exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, wherein the program causing the computer to perform:

receiving, from a server, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of a member of a message exchanging group;

when receiving a message to be transmitted to another server, judging whether or not an original address of the received message matches the old address contained in the absence response information;

replacing the original address of the message with a new address associated with the old address matching the original address; and

transmitting the message using the replaced address, which is the new address in the absence response information.

11. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium according to claim 10, wherein, when the message has been transmitted to the new address, notifying an administrator of the message exchange system or a requestor of the message transmission that the message has been transferred to the new address.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving, when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group changes, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member;

determining, from a plurality of provided message address lists, a message address list including the old address of the member, and extracting message addresses of the rest of the members of the predetermined message address lists;

specifying a server to which the absence response information is to be provided, on the basis of the extracted message address; and

distributing the absence response information to the specified server.

14. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein the absence response information contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

15. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 13, wherein during the absence-response-information distribution step, a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution.

16. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving from a server absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of a member of a message exchanging group;

when receiving a message to be transmitted to another server, judging whether or not an original address of the received message matches the old address contained in the absence response information;

replacing the original address with a new address associated with the old address matching the original address;

transmitting the message using the replaced address, which is the new address in the absence response information.

17. (Previously Presented) A message-address management method according to claim 16, further comprising the step of:

sending, when the message has been transmitted to the new address, a message to an administrator of the message exchange system or a requestor of the message transmission, the message reporting that the mail has been transferred to the new address.

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended) A message-address management apparatus for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the apparatus comprising:

when a message address of a member of a message exchanging group is changed, absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of the member is caused to be received from the client;

means for determining, from a plurality of message address lists, a message address list including the old address of the member;

means for extracting message addresses of the members of the determined message address list;

means for specifying a server to which the absence response information is to be provided, on the basis of the extracted message address; and

means for distributing the absence response information to the specified server.

20. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the absence response information received contains a period of validity of the absence response information.

21. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein a plurality of pieces of the absence response information to be distributed to the same server are gathered together for distribution by the means for distributing.

22. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus for exchanging messages among a plurality of servers and clients, the apparatus comprising:

means for receiving from a server absence response information including at least an old address and a new address of a member of a message exchanging group;

means for judging whether or not an original address of the received message matches the old address contained in the absence response information, when receiving a message to be transferred to another server;

means for replacing the original address of the message with a new address associated with the old address matching the original address; and

means for transmitting the message using the replaced address which is the new address in the absence response information.

23. (Previously Presented) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 22, further comprising means for sending, when the message has been transmitted to the new address by the means for transmitting, a message to an administrator of the message exchange system or a requestor of the mail transmission to notify that the message has been transferred to the new address.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (New) A computer readable medium according to claim 7, wherein the absence response information includes a flag indicating whether the absence response information is to be provided to a mail server administrator.

26. (New) A message address management method according to claim 13, wherein the distributing step includes distributing the absence response information to a mail server administrator if the information includes a flag indicating that the absence response information should be provided to the mail server administrator.

27. (New) A message-address management apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the absence response information includes a flag indicating whether the absence response information is to be provided to a mail server administrator.